

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing configurable assets in a distributed system environment, the method comprising:
 - storing help information about the configurable assets;
 - storing user information about users associated with the configurable assets;
 - receiving requests for the help information from the users; and
 - sending the help information to the users in accordance with the user information.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - updating the help information in response to changes to the configurable assets and to service provider devices that support and control the configurable assets.
3. A system to manage configurable assets in a distributed system environment, the system comprising:
 - a database to store help information about the configurable assets, and user information about users associated with the configurable assets; and
 - a management server to receive requests for the help information from the users, the management server being operable to send the help information to the users in accordance with the user information.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein the management server includes Web server functionality.
5. A system to manage configurable assets in a distributed system environment, the system comprising:
 - means for storing help information about a plurality of configurable assets;
 - means for storing user information about users associated with the plurality of configurable assets;
 - means for receiving requests for the help information from the users; and
 - means for sending the help information to the users in accordance with the user information.

6. A system to manage configurable assets in a distributed system environment, the system comprising:

a service provider device;

a plurality of configurable assets under control of the service provider device;

a management server, the management server comprising:

a help database to store help information about the configurable assets and the service provider device and about features of the configurable assets and the service provider device;

a security database to store user information about users associated with the configurable assets;

a security interface to update the user information and to grant users access to the help information according to the user information;

a network discovery interface to automatically discover status information regarding the service provider device and the configurable assets;

an interface to automatically update the help information according to the status information, and to manually update the help information according to instructions from an administrator of the management server;

a application interface to receive requests for the help information from the users, the interface being operable to send the help information to the users in accordance with the security interface.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the management server includes Web server functionality.

8. The system of claim 6, wherein the service provider device comprises a telecommunications switch.

9. The system of claim 6, wherein the service provider device provides private branch exchange (PBX) functionality.

10. The system of claim 6, wherein the configurable assets comprise telephone equipment.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the service provider device provides voice mail service to the telephone equipment.

12. A method of managing configurable assets in a distributed system environment, the method comprising:

storing help information about a plurality of configurable assets and a service provider device and about features of the configurable assets and a service provider device, the configurable assets under control of the service provider device;

storing user information about users associated with the configurable assets;

updating the user information;

automatically discovering status information regarding the service provider device and the configurable assets;

automatically updating the help information according to the status information;

manually updating the help information according to instructions from an administrator;

receiving requests for the help information from the users;

granting the users access to the help information according to user information; and

sending the help information to the users.

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